

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A ROMANCE OF MODERN DAYS.

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CHAPTER XLVII. LED INTO TEMPTATION.

"WELL, really it is most sad and most extraordinary," said Mrs. Bethune to Adela. "Philip Gillbanks has come from that wild black country only to be lost in a fog. How very strange! Here is the account of it in the 'Morning Post.' It has quite upset Dora, she isn't the same girl, and as to dear Forster, he ought not to go back. It is fortunate that he is obliged to stay in bed with a return of that fever, for I really believe he would already have gone back to those poor Winskells. There was always something odd about that marriage, wasn't there? And this end seems even stranger. I mean, of course, it is natural, but one does wish it was more like an ordinary bereavement."

"Oh, mother! It is dreadful; but Dora won't be comforted at all. I wish she had never gone, it weighs on her mind. Mr. De Lucy looks quite puzzled because Dora has not once contradicted him! He is really very sympathetic, and I notice he won't mention anything which reminds Dora of it. As to Forster, he was so well, Dora says, before this happened."

"When people take such odd titles you can't expect them to have things happen to them quite in the same way as ordinary mortals."

"I wish we had never met them, if this is to be the result. I hardly dare go into Forster's room, he always asks if there is a letter for him, and Dora won't say a word about it all."

"It's very extraordinary! A mysterious disappearance never seems quite proper, does it?"

"No, people will think poor Philip has been murdered, or decoyed away, or I don't know what else! It is quite wonderful what stories fly round from extremely ordinary misfortunes."

"They all think he fell into the Rothery," sighed Mrs. Bethune. "I'm sure it sounds quite natural; just what I should do in a fog, and I dare say on a clear day too, dear. What a comfort Dora has come back safe and sound. I have got a drawer full of letters for her to sort, but she seemed so unlike herself that I haven't shown them to her. She says the house—the Palace, those strange people call it—is beautiful now, all except one turret which the King—my dear, isn't it comical, all these names? Well, the old man, who is quite crazy, it appears, won't have his burrow touched, so it remains in a decayed condition."

"But the oddest part of the story is his finding the hidden treasure. I never thought such things existed outside boys' books, did you, mother?"

"It isn't common, but nothing about our beautiful Princess was common. Imagine her a widow, poor thing, poor thing! The Rookwoods will want to hear all about everything. I'm glad they are coming to-day, though poor Forster looked quite pained when I told him. He does not want to see anybody. He was so very fond of his poor dear friend, wasn't he?"

"Philip Gillbanks was the nicest man I have ever met," said Adela suddenly.

"Except Forster, dear Adela, you forget."

"Of course, but Forster was so much accustomed to being master and ordering

people, that he hardly knew how wonderful his friend was. It isn't so very easy to be always obeying."

"Oh, but dear Forster takes the lead better than any one else."

"Then I'm sure Philip Gillbanks took the other position better than any one else I know."

"Till he married! He was quite infatuated about our Princess, and she seemed so little fitted to be the wife of an ordinary man."

"There's Jack!" exclaimed Adela, "and where is Dora? She must leave off moping."

To Dora the whole household seemed so bright and cheerful, that she felt all the more deeply the contrast to that other home. The secret, which in spite of herself she had discovered, weighed her down and seemed to darken even the sunshine, but it could not dim the atmosphere of truth and goodness that pervaded her own home. She could not, however, shake off the misery of it, nor could she feel that she would ever be the same happy Dora as of old.

Her life was changed by one touch of the wand of evil. To her young imagination there was no difference in the degrees of evil. She interpreted the Gospel words literally, so to her this unholy love, this sin, meant an angel's fall.

And all this knowledge Dora must keep to herself! For Forster's sake she must neither speak to him of it nor to any one else, and she must live her daily life without seeming to know it.

She, too, heard the Rookwoods drive up to the door, and she made an effort to go down to meet them.

They were already in the drawing-room, and Lady Rookwood was deep in conversation.

"Oh, yes, we heard it in town. It is in all the society papers. You see, the wedding of your strange Princess surprised a good many persons. Oh! here is Dora. Why, you must know all about it."

"How did it happen?" said Lord Rookwood. "To be lost in a fog seems odd. He was not going on a long journey, was he?"

"I only know it's true," said Dora.

"Yes, but the fellow wasn't a fool. Was there no trace found anywhere?"

"Please don't ask anything more about it, Cousin Jack. It was all so—so dreadful," said Dora.

Lord Rookwood at once turned the conversation, and then he soon suggested going upstairs to see Forster.

"That fever is a beastly thing. I told Forster he would repeat going off on such a fool's errand. That settlement will prove more than he bargained for."

"I wish you would persuade him that he's done enough for other people," chimed in Mrs. Bethune; "he really might try and get some employment at home. It is so hard to explain Forster's work when people ask what my son is doing."

"Poor aunt! In future you must say that he is a fashionable philanthropist."

"Forster would indeed be shocked! You know he hates fashions. But do come and see him; he's better to-day, only the doctor won't let him go out of his room. It is that anxiety that brought the fever back, and that long journey home. He thought it was all so bad for Dora—so it was."

This last sentence was said in the passage as Mrs. Bethune led the way upstairs.

"I met some friends of the Princess yesterday. They are much excited about the news of her widowhood. They take a great interest in a rich widow."

"Jack, dear, how shocking! It is only such a short time since that poor Philip was lost. How can people say such things? Poor dears, I don't suppose they mean it, but they shouldn't, they really shouldn't. How angry Forster would be if he knew it! Don't say anything like that to him."

"Don't be afraid, aunt, I've only come about the settlement, which means that I pay up for Forster's little amusements in Africa."

"Do be thankful that you can help the poor dear people! I wish I could, but Forster says you are the proper person to squeeze."

"Does he? Well, he won't do much more in that line. It only ruins his own health, and brings that nice fellow home to lose his wits in a fog."

Forster was sitting by a fire, though at Bethune Castle the late September sun was still warm, and there was no such chilliness as that experienced in the Rothery valley during even the summer months of the year. Forster's handsome face was so strangely altered, that on seeing him Lord Rookwood exclaimed:

"Good heavens, Forster! What have you done to yourself?"

"Yes, dear boy, he has ruined his health for all kinds of poor dear people."

"Nonsense, mother. I say, Jack, don't bother about me."

Mrs. Bethune went out and left them alone.

"What's all this strange business about Philip?" said Lord Rookwood, sitting down and looking at Forster with undisguised astonishment. "It's been a— a blow to you, I see. Aunt said you had got all right again of that African fever, but you look anything but all right."

"No, I'm all wrong, everything is wrong, Jack. I—I wish I had never come back, and then Philip would have stayed there too."

"It is no use going back on things like that. It's too complicated; besides, if he was to— to be lost in a fog, a fog would have come on out there, if there are such things."

"No, such things are not all mapped out like that, independently of one's actions. I was a base coward to forsake the post. I say, Jack, I owe you no end of— of apologies. You gave us the money, and I wasn't fit to use it."

"Oh! I say, if you are in a penitent mood for nothing, I shall have to stump up some more tin, and I really didn't mean to. Hang the tin! You know I've got lots, and if you want me to go bankrupt for the Rookery, why, I must." Jack tried to laugh. "And look here, look at this report of a fellow who went to the settlement."

He drew out a newspaper cutting from an inner pocket. It gave a glowing description of the colony, comparing it favourably with all the other undertakings of the same kind, but it added: "The result of this is owing to the personal efforts and extraordinary exertions of that leader among men, Forster Bethune, cousin of the noble lord whose generous gift of money has made the enterprise possible."

"That ought to cheer you, Forster! You really made it go on all fours, and you should hear how people plague me with congratulations, and treat me like a modern philanthropic Juggernaut. I daren't say that I had it all taken from me at the bayonet point by your silver tongue."

"But, Jack, it wasn't you nor I, it was Philip that made it a success. I shall never forget all that he did. I went out with half a heart, and he was so afraid that people should say I had failed, that he put his whole being, his whole heart into the work, and made it what it is."

"But what the deuce does he mean by coming home and disappearing in this idiotic fashion?"

"Mean! Oh, it is the judgement of Heaven on me," and Forster groaned.

"Oh, nonsense; that is a good phrase, you know, for your East Enders, but it

doesn't go down in society! What had you to do with it?"

"I—I—I don't know, but I can never forgive myself. I saw him—and I did not follow him or warn him of that dangerous river bank and——"

Forster was putting a strong curb over his inclination to make Jack his confessor. For everybody's sake, for the sake of Philip's memory, it was especially important that the truth should never leak out.

"Well, you saw him in that glen. It was foggy and he never came home again. Humph! But his body has not been found."

"No, and it may never be recovered. Those rivers pierce the rocky bed at times and run underground, or else flow through such deep, narrow channels that it is impossible to follow their course."

"It seems odd! By the way, Forster, there is no suspicion of treachery, I suppose?"

Forster started from his chair.

"Treachery! What makes you think so?"

"Nothing, of course. I don't know the place or the people, but you once said Philip would never be well received up there."

"But he was her husband, legally married, you know."

"I never supposed it otherwise."

"But his money rebuilt the whole place, it saved the family from ruin."

"Her royal highness was——"

"Hush, Jack, let us respect Philip's memory. I am going back there as soon as possible; as long as his body is not found there may be hope—but I have none. I know Philip is dead, and—and I shall never forgive myself."

"You are wretchedly weak. You and Dora seem quite changed creatures."

"Dora—poor child!"

"Blue devils have possession of you, but I mean to drive them out. I'm so awfully matter-of-fact, and to say the truth I'm a being living on such utterly false pretences, that I want to perform some good work to compensate for the feeling."

"False pretences! Not you, Jack! If you don't mind getting rid of your good opinion of me, I shall feel better."

"But I can't! Hullo! here's Dora. I'll go and see uncle. I've brought him a rare edition of something. Her ladyship looked into it; I didn't. She pretends to be literary. We all of us live on pretence, you see."

"Yes."

Then Dora entered and shut the door. She came towards the fireplace, and knelt down by her brother. The look of dejection in one formerly so light-hearted was pitiful to see.

Suddenly Forster's face flushed, for Dora drew a letter out of her pocket.

"Forster—this has come for you." It was addressed in Penelope's handwriting. Dora misunderstood the flush, for her secret weighed heavily on her.

"Forster, Forster, don't read it. It is from Penelope."

"Not read it! It may be about——"

"Oh, no, no; he is dead. I know he is. Don't let Philip see—people do see those they love when they are dead, I am sure they do. Don't let him see that."

"See what?" said Forster hoarsely. The girl's words were like sharp-edged knives.

"You know—you know. Don't let him see how much you and Penzie love each other."

Dora herself looked like the culprit, as she hid her face in the arm-chair.

"Dora, how can you?"

"I know I ought not to say it. The Princess said for your sake I must not, but I love you so much—oh, so much. You know that you have been my hero ever since I was a baby. I know I don't understand such things, only it is wrong, it must be wrong."

"You need not fear, Dora. My life must be lived on other lines."

He broke open the seal and read the one line the letter contained:

"Come at once if you can."

He showed it in silence to Dora.

"Oh, don't go—don't go, Forster. It is an evil place; don't go. What does 'Lead us not into temptation' mean? Don't go."

"Hush, little Dora; I must go."

CHAPTER XLVIII. DESOLATE DAYS.

SOMETIMES it happens that, in the north, winter steps into the month of October and places her chilly feet on summer's last carpet of flowers, making the blossoms shiver at her cold touch.

In the Rothery valley there had come this sudden spell of winter weather.

Often and often had the King of Rothery, with his son and Oldeorn, spent nights in wandering on the fells; but now the old man's life seemed more than ever paralysed, and more than ever his strange madness

increased. Money had been his mania all his life, and now that he had conveyed the treasure to his room at the old farm, he watched it as a dog guards his favourite bone.

Even Oldeorn, with well-seasoned nerves, now felt a strange creepiness when he noted the expression of his master's face; for the old man would sit for hours in a kind of torpid contemplation of his treasure, then, if roused, he would fly into a terrible passion which made one's blood run cold. He seemed to be returning slowly towards the type of the brute creation from whence, as we are told, man has originally sprung, and this was shown more especially in his night wanderings.

Since Philip's disappearance no one except Oldeorn had paid great attention to him. Penelope experienced a strange horror of her father's presence, and the Duke was so taken up with business that only once or twice had he tried to persuade his brother to give up his treasure. He had been able to assure himself that it was no mare's nest—the treasure was a fact, and needed to be judiciously dealt with—but the blow which had fallen on the Palace had swallowed up all other matters.

Everything that could be done had been done, but in vain, and now no one entertained a hope that Penelope's husband was still alive. Only two persons, however, knew the probable cause of his disappearance, and the lips of those two were sealed. To others it appeared that Philip had been lost in the fog, that he had accidentally missed his footing and that the cruel Rothery had swept him away into the bowels of the earth; but for those two, Philip, in deep anguish, had rushed away from the treachery of a friend and the coldness of a woman, and blinded by despair, had flung prudence to the winds. The sadness had been increased tenfold by the arrival of Mr. Gillbanks and his daughter Clytie.

In one thing Penelope was firm. She would not see them, she shut herself up in her room, and refused to come out or to let the visitors see her. The Duke accounted for it by the fact of her grief; she was utterly changed, he said, and said truly, as he begged the two to respect her wishes; for the terrible shock and the long uncertainty she had endured had quite unnerved her.

The Palace seemed to the busy merchant a place of the dead. His grief for his son was deep but silent. The rugged nature that had made the man what he was,

one of the richest merchants of Manchester, was not one to show any outward sign of grief; in that respect he and the proud aristocrats met on the same ground, but here the sympathy ended. Mr. Gillbanks recoiled before the studied politeness of the Duke, and was moreover deeply hurt at Penelope's refusal to see him. He had hated the marriage, and Clytie had openly said it was only a money affair, but she liked the reflected glory acquired from her brother's marriage. There had never been much in common between the brother and sister. Philip was of a nature naturally so refined, so pure and elevated, that Clytie's purse-proud vulgarity and love of show had recoiled from contact with a being whose actions, in her eyes, were the result of incipient insanity. To have no wish to make the most of yourself, no desire to shine by wealth, no worldly ambition, and, above all, not to be ashamed of his hero-worship for a poor aristocrat, who was himself but half sane, all this was beyond her understanding.

The loss of her brother was therefore to Clytie not a personal loss in the true sense of the word, but of course she was properly shocked and horrified, and she was not a little indignant that by Philip's will, duly attested by her father, a very large portion of the Gillbanks wealth passed to Penelope. However, though large, it was not so large as would have been the case had Philip lived, and the consequence was that Clytie Gillbanks would in future be an heiress.

Clytie looked forward to a good time, for with her it would be a case of diamond cut diamond; so, as she smothered herself in the most expensive crape which she could buy, she did not sorrow as one who had no hope in the future—in this world, that is to say. Happily her father's state of health was a sufficient excuse to cut the visit as short as possible, and indeed what could they do? Everything that could be done had been done. Even now, ten days after the event, searchers were still kept tramping for miles round the dales, and still there were watchers stationed by the banks of the Rothery.

A great stillness had fallen over the place. There was no laughter heard, the servants moved about the Palace more than ever as if they were soulless machines, and Penelope herself was never seen except when twilight fell over the land; then she would walk out enveloped in black from head to foot, and walk swiftly up the glen path till she reached the small gate. She

never varied her walk. Every day she went there, and the rest of the time she spent in her own sitting-room, working at the old embroidery frame, which had been put away since the day when she and the Duke had started for London.

All this time, however, her inner life was one of strange excitement. The needle flew swiftly backward and forward, and her new thoughts were worked into the delicate silk flowers.

She was free—free! How ardently she had longed for this moment, and now that it had come she could not realise it. She felt a great blank around her, as if she were alone in a desert, and as if some one had drawn a magic circle round her, bidding no one approach her on pain of death.

On pain of death! She shivered a little at the sentence. What was death? Her mother was dead, that was almost natural; but Philip was dead, and that she could not yet understand. Had she wished for his death? In words, never, but in something more powerful than words, she had called for a freedom that nothing but death could give.

And now she was free!

Sometimes at this juncture of her thoughts she would push her work away and pace up and down the room. Then she would look out of the window repeating over and over again: "I am free! I am free!"

But these words did not impress her with the fact, words and ideas having no connecting link. Perhaps, she argued, the news had come too suddenly upon her, perhaps by-and-by she would realise it. Now she could only say it: "I am free!"

Even in the ordinary sense of the word she could not feel it, for over and over again she caught herself listening for Philip's footsteps, as she had often done before, with a feeling of dread and shrinking. Was this because Philip had had no funeral service read over him, because no one had closed his eyes, no one had heard his last words?

When it came to this thought a terrible eeriness took possession of her, and her loneliness and freedom so frightened her that she was always forced to ring the bell violently. Betty invariably answered the summons, for no one else was allowed to come into Penelope's room. But when Betty entered with her quiet ways and her question as to what the Princess needed, Penelope quickly made up some excuse, or invented some need. Usually she said:

"Tell the Duke to come and see me when he is not busy."

The Duke was seldom too busy to come to his niece; but here again there was disappointment. A great shadow seemed to lie between them. They could not talk about Philip; instead, therefore, the Duke plunged into business matters. When a certain time had elapsed she would be mistress of a very large income, but her father must be persuaded to use his new-found treasure in repaying the cost of the repairs, or else he must give up his right to all interference. Lawyers made many difficulties and must be satisfied. One day the Duke added:

"That north turret, for instance, is really barely safe. The architect said so when we first began work; but your father is most persistent against its being repaired. I tried again yesterday, and I—I really was afraid of his fury. But as things are, what can one do? He is not too irresponsible to manage many things, and as long as possible we must keep him with us. Besides, doctors are queer fish, and we don't want the faculty prying into our affairs. Lawyers are bad enough. Mr. Gillbanks's man of business is really a fellow one can hardly ask to sit down."

"What can you expect of such people?" said Penelope scornfully.

"However, whatever happens, you, my Penzie, are safe and independent of all the changes and chances of the house of Winskell. Your future can be nothing but brilliant."

"Oh, uncle!" she said, standing up and catching her breath a little. "Don't say that. I am a true Winskell, you know I would rather fall with its old name, I—I—but now, anyhow, I am free to——" she broke off quickly—what was she saying?

The Duke did not appear to have noticed her words, and continued:

"It was for the house of Winskell you and I worked so hard. We have succeeded on every side, for really to depend on your father is to lean on a very poor support."

"He is the King," she said, sitting down again to her work, and the words seemed to do her good, for she could realise them. One could not be free of all burdens; perhaps, after all, there was some advantage in accepting a few. In this case it was the honour of the old name that was bound up in it; her father was the King.

There was a long pause between them; both felt the strange something that was wanting to their happiness, in spite of their success. On the Duke's side, as long as the King was the head of the

family, even nominally, how could the glory of the house be increased? And for Penelope, she knew that she had yet to face her position. All the courage of the Winskells would be wanted to make her really free to carry out her design.

The days went slowly, very slowly by, for she lived in a torpid state. The future, to which she had offered so much in the old days, had not fulfilled its part, it had yet to give her happiness. In that old compact she had forgotten to ask for it, believing that joy was everywhere; but she had found out her mistake, and now, with all the strength of her strong nature, she called out that the future must add happiness to the wealth it had already supplied. She had tried wealth without happiness, and she had found it to be wanting, woefully wanting.

One day she spent all the cold, gloomy afternoon in deep thought; she did not even ply her needle, but sat near the old open hearth where the great logs rested on the shining andirons. Nero found his way up to her, and stretched himself at her feet. She did not notice him till suddenly she rose and laughed softly.

"They call me Philip's widow," she said aloud; "but I want to be—to be a wife, his wife." Then she wrote one line on a sheet of paper and sent it that evening. The envelope was directed to Forster.

OFF BEATEN TRACKS IN THE LAKE DISTRICT.

I BEGAN by walking right off to Troutbeck in the cool of the evening, with just a night kit in a cartridge case, a macintosh on one arm and a stick in the other hand. A man wants no more than this, plus fair endowment in the matter of lungs and legs. Then, given a patient spirit and rather more than an average appreciation of Nature's excellences, he ought to have some halcyon hours among the Lakes.

They seemed to compassionate me on the coach that scrambled up towards Windermere on the Patterdale road. I returned them their pity threefold. A pack of people squeezed together so that rib ran into rib, some holding umbrellas betwixt them and the exquisite summer sun on its wane, and all patently perspiring and matted with dust; newly-wedded couples, ill-assorted folk from two or three continents, and the tramp of horses' feet and the jingle of their harness dulling their ears against the carol

of blackbirds and linnets—in the name of joy wherein lay their superiority? I was free as air, could breathe—and perspire if necessary—at my ease, whistle and swing my stick, stop where I chose to look at Windermere's silver, gleaming beyond the tree-tops, and take my fill of the dark mountains that frame the lake's head. Half-way I sat on a stile, and bared my hair to a shower. The clover smelt the sweeter for the moisture, and the birds piped more ardently, as if they had just received from heaven the boon their throats most craved.

That night and the next I slept at the "Mortal Man," in Troutbeck. My landlady, who did all the waiting on me, was a hearty, skimpy, nut-brown person of the middle age, with wonderful teeth and a trick of never addressing me as "sir." She had no guest but myself. I could thus sit untroubled at the great bow window of her inn, which gazed down Troutbeck's green at a section of Windermere's middle reach, smoke my pipe, think and dream at my pleasure. That ancient wrestler, Walker, of Troutbeck, came hither to drink ale and talk. There were two or three more with him. They live under idyllic conditions in Troutbeck, among meadows and mountains and remote from the railway's screech. That, however, does not prevent them from being very fond of ale. My landlady was new to the place, having lately come from another dale. She told of the anxiety the Troutbeck revellers caused her at first, but she flattered herself she had now taken their measure and measured herself with them—satisfactorily.

Years back the "Mortal Man" bore a signboard inscribed as follows :

O mortal man that liv'st on bread,
How comes thy nose to be so red?
Thou silly ass, that look'st so pale,
It comes of Sally Birkett's ale.

My skimpy, nut-brown landlady was Sally Birkett's successor.

England has many admirable lanes, but none, to my mind, more admirable than Troutbeck's, where these run towards the wilds at the head of its glen. You have mountains on either hand; the beck, of course, more or less, by your side; flowery meadows sloping this way and that; and such a tangle of honeysuckle and hawthorn for hedges as the eye loves to behold. Amid the hawthorn are wild raspberries—with a fine enduring flavour—and here and there white and pink foxgloves and ferns innumerable. A little church tinkles its

bell in a hollow where several of these seducing byways agree to meet.

There is a remarkable academic warning on a stile in the neighbourhood, where the bough of a tree threatens damage to the explorer. The words "Mens tuum caput" are as good in their way as one glass—or two—of Sally Birkett's ale doubtless used to be.

From the "Mortal Man" I hied me on the third day to Mardale by Haweswater. My landlady said the weather looked bad. It did—there could be no question about it. Windermere, down the valley, was three parts lost in rain. It remained so lost while I breakfasted on the freshly-picked strawberries and the new-laid eggs of my landlady's demesne. Yet all the while Troutbeck was under glorious sunshine, and the mountains I had to face were clear to their summits. The Troutbeck bees seemed to have no doubt that it would be good weather for them; their excitement among the honeyed flowers was confusing. Yet even had it rained hard on us I should not have tarried. The man who fears a soaking must not come to Westmoreland. He should first of all take to his heart the subtle description of the Lake District contrived—if the papers are to be believed—by the proverbial School Board boy: "The English lakes are supposed to be very beautiful; they are very wet."

I started impetuously, resolved to reach Mardale before the rain. It is about a ten-mile walk. But the walk is a climb or a descent the whole way, and includes the summit of High Street as its crowning point. High Street is two thousand six hundred and sixty-three feet above the sea level. I also went over Ill Bell and Froswick—bold little peaks with nasty rocks to the east. The sun, when it was not veiled, was fearful. And ever, it seemed, I was likely to be absorbed in the mist that drifted with the rain up Troutbeck's vale—soon far beneath me—with a menacing air. It might have been bad to be caught on these fells, and assuredly I should have had an anxious hour ere getting down the rocks of Rough Crag towards Mardale. As it was, I nearly slipped into Blea Water, eight hundred feet down. Few things in the Lake District are better worth seeing than the dark, knotted crags of High Street over Blea Water, and the black precipices of Harter Fell to the south. These objects enclose the head of Mardale and Haweswater, and the world knows not of their glory.

Time was when the North-Western Railway threatened Mardale with intrusion.

Look on the map, and you may understand it. The line was to run from Penrith by Haweswater, and through the mountains to Kendal. The gods be praised that £ s. d. stood in the way. It would have cost a fortune to tunnel under Harter Fell, and all Mardale's peace would have been spoiled.

As it is, the "Dun Bull Inn"—I decline to call it an hotel—the parsonage, the church, Chapel Hill, and a farmstead or two constitute the village, which stretches divinely up two green glades towards the mountains. Ice-cold springs and lonely waterfalls feed the becks in these two sequestered dales, and the bleating of sheep mingles with the bark of collie dogs and the voice of the waters in the shadowed solitudes. Lower down you see the blue length of Haweswater, with the green oak-wood of Naddle Forest on the steeps of one side, and the bare highlands, some two thousand feet in elevation, which separate Haweswater from Ullswater on the other side.

I found the "Dun Bull" emptier even than the "Mortal Man." Even the landlord and his lady had gone off to Penrith for the day. But I was taken in hand by a suave old man, with thick, straight, white hair—a man for a poet to rhyme about—and with his aid I broke my fast in a cool room. I shall long remember this old man. He was better than a directory at local records, and possessed a most engaging gift of gossip. And when I had lunched under his venerable care, I strolled to the churchyard and lay among the tombs on a pile of new-cut grass, alone with my reflections and a cigar.

Mardale church must rank with the other ecclesiastical curiosities of the Lake District. It has a sweet situation and sweet surroundings, and its nave is just eight paces long. Its average congregation is ten or twelve, though its twelve curt pews will hold about three persons each. The oaken beams of its roof show the axe marks of their smoothing. From its windows you may, during the sermon, feast your eyes on the cascades which perennially tumble from the cliffs Swindale way.

What a cure for a clergyman to hold! His ministrations may well run risk of drifting into a quite peculiarly parochial groove. As he stands in his pulpit, he might, with a wand, touch all his congregation on the head—if they would tolerate the familiarity. Of a man in such a situation some unconventionality may almost be claimed as a duty. He must either grow to

be loved with an uncommon affection, or degenerate into an unamiable eccentric, the mock and butt of his few parishioners.

There is a quaint epitaph to a lad of fifteen in this Mardale churchyard. "He was," we are told, "always grave and decent in devotion, very dutiful to his parents, amiable and pleasant to his brothers and sisters, courteous and gentle in his demeanour, ingenious and active, and of a mild disposition, beloved of every one. His death lamented by many."

Yet he was one of a stout stock for all his virtuousness. The Holmeses of Mardale—he being a slip of them—have lived here since the time of John. Only in the last decade have the family failed of male heirs. Later in the evening I spent an hour or two in the gloaming with the present male representative of the clan, who was that by marriage. He showed me the "Luck of Mardale"—a pale brown beaker of delft with the words "Hugh De M." upon it. The vessel lacks one handle, but it is otherwise hale. It holds about a pint, and the mind may see a rare vision of its vicissitudes in accepting the common tradition that it came to Mardale when the first of the family accepted the valley in tenure from King John. One of the collie dogs of its present holder nearly gripped me at the calf as I returned in the dark to the "Dun Bull" with some such thoughts in my head. These northern sheep dogs are wonderful brutes. But I never get on the fells among the sheep without wishing that their sagacity went a little farther. They ought really to be able to distinguish between a harmless pedestrian and a designing tramp. The problem, however, is one they never take time to face.

Haweswater is as charming as little Mardale. It is very lonely, and after sunset its fish leap at the moths with exquisite enthusiasm. On my second afternoon by its shores I lay for long under the shade of a gnarled hawthorn on a promontory of the Naddle woods, and marvelled at the lake's neglect by the tourist world. It is out of the way, to be sure; but that ought to be only an additional incentive to the visitor. No craft broke the line of its two and a half miles of length. And the noble amphitheatre of its southern end was a sight for the gods. There are no trim villas here, and no lodging-houses. The "Dun Bull" rules supreme in the district. Trollope's Thornthwaite Hall at the other end of the lake is a famous old white manor house, with a host of milking cows in its

stalls. In the three miles betwixt the Hall and the "Dun Bull" there is but one house, saving the parsonage, of more pretension than the common farmstead.

By the way, there is an intimation savouring of the feudal times set up near Haweswater. "Notice is hereby given," it runs, "that any person presuming to unfix or use a Boat for any purpose whatever on this lake without permission from — will be prosecuted." The tourist feels small when he encounters such swelling manifestoes. Perchance, too, he asks himself what in the world he would do if somehow he saw some one drowning in the lake. Would he dare, in the face of such large words, to unfix a boat, or would he forbear? The notice, however, is but another proof of the privacy of Haweswater and little Mardale.

My second night at Mardale closed in ominously. The mountains early put on their vestments of cloud, the wind sighed, and the glass sank steadily. I was not therefore desperately disappointed to awake in the morning with the storm orchestra in my ears. Rain was falling in serried lines, and the knoll of pines opposite my window was but dimly visible through the shafts. Under an eave of the "Dun Bull," which I could have reached with my hand, a starling had a nest, and a young family in the nest. The methodical bird was going to and fro in the turmoil, feeding her children. She looked very dismal in her wet plumage, and the very worms she brought to her babes dripped moisture from their wriggling extremities.

To be or not to be? I put the question to the "Dun Bull" household and received no encouragement to depart. It did seem a bit rash to face the fells "while rocking winds were piping" so very loud, and dampness so manifestly ruled the roost. Nevertheless, after breakfast, having seen to my flask, I paid my bill, endued myself in my macintosh, and faced the elements. There is pleasure in serene skies and the breath of warm dry zephyrs. There is also pleasure, though of a different kind, in battling with the hurricane—even in being, for once in a way, thoroughly soaked.

Again and again I stopped for breath under the steep shelter of the crags by way of which I fought to the uplands of High Raise. The clouds which whirled about me parted once in a half-hour or so. Mardale glowed like an emerald far down, and was then all obliterated again. So it continued until I was on the watershed,

fighting tooth and nail with the tempest. But for the intermittent rifts of sunlight I might have gone gravely astray. As it was, these and my compass sufficed. The sheep seemed amazed to observe a tourist under such weather conditions, and their lambs made much ado about nothing. Here, too, as elsewhere, I came upon dead "muttons," tainting the air and showing how the ravens had explored them. But the rest of the herd do not appear to mind these skeletons at their feasts. They graze pacifically by the decomposed remains.

There is a Roman road on these heights running nearly due north—at least, so my guide book indicated. But I traversed it without knowing it. What in the world could the Romans want with a thoroughfare two thousand five hundred feet above common ground? Even as an eyrie they might have chosen better.

At length I was rewarded for my perseverance, obstinacy, idiocy, or whatever you like to term it. The green hollow of Rampsgill gleamed beneath me during one of the weather's kindly moments, and the bold tump of the Nab rock on the other side told me I had not trusted my compass in vain. Ullswater, too, was visible at the end of another glen. It looked like a pool of lead. Beyond, everywhere, were the lower parts of the mountains, their heads all in angry clouds. Helvellyn was conjecturable only by the inordinate inkiness of the heavens in its quarter.

The slope of the mountains towards Fusedale, which lets upon Ullswater at Howtown, is something prodigious. It is a declivity to be tackled with beam ends. But I quite declined to adopt this humiliating mode of descent. Besides, really the grass was too wet for anything.

Now, if ever a man merited pneumonia or some equally obnoxious lung affection, surely I did. I ran with rain. Yet I lunched at Howtown with an abounding appetite, and afterwards took steamer to Patterdale, all dripping as I was. There were two or three young couples on the boat, enjoying the bliss of the honeymoon under umbrellas. The man at the wheel cast a fish-like eye of wonder at them what time he was not shaking the rain from his nose. "There's days," he said, in a moment of confidence, "when the boat's full of 'em. Astonishing what a difference there is in their conduc', sir!" His commentary may seem uncalled for, but it was not. For while the damsel under one umbrella might be seen furtively stroking her husband's

wet cheeks and smoothing his bedraggled whiskers, under another umbrella man and wife sat as nearly as possible back to back.

Wet I was, and wet I stayed till bedtime. I yearned to make acquaintance with Striding Edge in storm, and would have attempted it there and then had not the rain assumed an appearance of stubborn cruelty hard to credit. There was no looking at it.

But the next day at seven o'clock I was afoot, blithe and determined. The portents were not hopeful. To a palm's breadth of blue there was an empyrean of gloom, and the clouds raced from the old rainy quarter. This latter feature argued wild doings on Helvellyn's height; and the thunder of the Grisedale beck tossing its white waves over the rocks in its deep-wooded bed told of the moisture draining from the uplands towards the lake. I soon saw more of it. The heavens darkened, and an hour before I had come through the bracken-slopes to the beginning of the Edge, the black mountains were glorious under the white lace of their cascades. Was I crazy to think of groping through the upper mist and rain in a wind some thirty miles an hour strong? I'm sure I don't know; I know only that I liked the buffeting—up to a certain point. But I had to behave like a ship in a storm. It was impossible to stand the pressure upon a bellied macintosh. I therefore reefed all sail, and took my buffeting and drenching as a matter of course.

Worse came upon me when I was nearing the apex of the Edge. I had never yet been so maltreated by Dame Nature. The gusts were staggering. Once and only once the mist blew aside for a welcome but delusive instant to show me Red Tarn far down to the right. I would almost rather have foregone the spectacle. It was not pleasant to think of being caught in the claws of the wind, lifted, toyed with for a while in the furious upper air, and then dropped like a shot into that ink-coloured pool of desolation.

At length I gave it up. The thing seemed impossible, nor do I care if more accomplished cragsmen smile at me compassionately. I turned tail, and in a rage fought my way down Helvellyn's slopes to Grisedale, with a surge of mist and rain at my back. By the melancholy tarn I rested, and then I scrambled round by Dolly Waggon towards Wythburn, taking the huge mountain in flank. Once, for sustenance and comfort, I lit a cigarette,

but a moment afterwards the wind hissed the little luxury from my mouth and swept it I could not tell whither. It was three o'clock ere I had stumbled through my destined number of bogs and descended, ill-humoured and hungry, to the little "Nag's Head Inn," where I remembered ten years back having eaten an excellent cherry pie. I flattered myself that, though beaten, I was not disgraced.

The "Nag's Head" visitors' book and the "Nag's Head" larder were both invigorating. They seemed even to have an effect on the weather. I had not done with the cold beef ere the sun shone on me and set me steaming.

This visitors' book beats most such literary records. Amid much that was readable and commonplace, I came upon a devout remark and a profane one that may bear passing on. An appreciative and rapturous tourist writes:

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

("Who said it wasn't?" demands an inquisitive successor.)

The profane entry may excite more interest:

I found the beer good.

W. E. GLADSTONE.

The Wythburn church over against the "Nag's Head," and on the very ankle of great Helvellyn, is good to see, it is so neat and snug. Hartley Coleridge should behold it now.

Humble it is and meek and very low,
And speaks its purpose by a single bell.

But its humility was doubtless, in Coleridge's time, not dissociated from a certain amount of dirt and neglect. There is none such in 1894. A pigmy in size, it is a very martinet for its orderliness.

So bright an afternoon sent me and my cartridge case afoot again at four o'clock. Thirlmere was a tongue of silvery surface as I climbed the fells west of it for Rothwaite. The air was fresh and exhilarating, but the bogs were execrable. The miry plateau I had to cross was trackless, though with the Borrowdale mountains written plainly against the western sky. My guide book counselled me to make for a certain cairn in a certain direction. I did so, as I fancied; but when I got within a stone's throw of it, my cairn walked off—'twas a sheep. So easily are poor mortals misguided in this vale of tears!

Anon, however, I descended abruptly upon the little hamlet of Watendlath by its shining tarn. Here I drank milk in

a sober cottage. The first person I chanced upon in the house was an idiot man, tossing his bare legs on an unsightly bedstead. Dear old Wordsworth would have moralised in blank verse upon his sad mumbings and the spectacle he cut. As for me, I wished him "good evening," drank my milk, and climbed on to Rosthwaite.

There was a divine sunset at Rosthwaite. All the peaks of Borrowdale, from the Sca Fell mass at one end to Eagle Crag at the other, were transfigured by the pearly evening light, and above them the heavens remained till bed-time scored with crimson and purple, and saffron and gold. Schopenhauer has rather laboriously told us why a beautiful view so tranquillises and satisfies. "It is," he says, "the only one among the complicated brain-phenomena which is always absolutely regular, blameless, and perfect." People make a wearing mistake by gadding about on the Continent among famous buildings and picture galleries. If they want a holiday, they should tell Mother Nature so at first hand. Mr. Ruskin and Schopenhauer are at one on this point.

By noon the next day I was lying on my back on Great Gable's summit, staring at Sca Fell, the Pike, and Lingmell over the way. It was Queen's weather at last. I felt the beginning of blisters at the nape of my neck.

I had enjoyed some glorious toil to get to my perch. Oh, the sweltering of Sty Head Pass! But there was compensation in the cold water that gushes so lavishly and beautifully from the moss into the tarn at its head. I knew of these matchless springs. Though I streamed with moisture and was parched with thirst, I postponed the pleasure of slaking the latter till I reached them, even as the epicure who is aware that a Heliogabalian feast is preparing for him does not very much mind being told it will not be ready for another half-hour. I lunched on a quart of this icy water and a cigarette. It may seem a poor sort of banquet, but then I had the mountains about me for an entrée, and as the great Napoleon used to say at dinner-time, "On vit par des entrées."

There is a vertical pike of rock below Great Gable's summit which the crazy love to climb. It affords them just a chance—little more—of breaking their necks. It is bracketed with the Pillar Rock as "an achievement." I gazed at both these little difficulties and yearned not to tackle them. While I lay on Great Gable a black dot, which I take to have been a man, stood at

the base of the Pillar Rock—apparently making an estimate of it. I left him weighing his life against the adventure. If he were a married man with a family, he should have taken his wife to the rock and had her opinion ere attempting the clamber.

Whenever I feel an itch to freshen my idea of Sca Fell and his neighbours, I shall scale Great Gable. It is one of the most impressive vantage spots in the kingdom.

But it is not nice descending thence to the dimple betwixt it and Kirkfell. Rolf Ganger—well known to most of us—was so called, they tell us, because he was so big that, because no horse could be found to carry him, he was always obliged to walk. Rolf Ganger would, in getting down where I got down, have set half Great Gable sliding at his heels. Even I was nearly overwhelmed.

More ups and downs and other springs in the mountain sides—a succession of such incidents at length brought me to the head of the Buttermere glen. And here I must needs choose an unconventional descent. I loathe exaggeration, yet I fancy the crags down which I let myself gingerly a foot and a hand at a time were scarcely five degrees out of the perpendicular. Once or twice mortal anxiety seized me for her own. But I evaded the awful lady's keeping in time, and so came whole and hungry into Buttermere village, long past the luncheon hour. They were cutting bracken on the hot hillsides by the roadway. Its perfume was luscious as that of a pineapple.

After luncheon I lay on the grass in the sun and dried. I smoked and reflected on Nature and man, and forgot my reflections one after the other, and so on until the maids came to call the kine to be milked. One of the maids used her leg rather than her voice as an incentive. She came my way, and I asked her about poor Mary of Buttermere. She took no pains to conceal her belief that poor Mary was only a plain young woman when she was alive, and not worth making a fuss about.

I had one more morning for my pleasure. It opened with overwhelming heat, so that early in the day I longed to be able to walk in my bones. At eight o'clock bees and butterflies were coquetting about the same flowers in the furious gladness of the midsummer, and the kine stood chest-deep in the lake to cheat the flies.

This, my last walk, was from Buttermere along the shores of Crummock, and thence by Coledale Pass to Keswick. Coledale Pass

is not common ground. It is the narrowest thing in passes in the district. I thought there would not be the breadth of a man at its summit. But there was, and beyond it one of the finest waterfalls Cumberland can show. Force Crag blocks the way to the east, and its face is embroidered with cascades.

Ere two o'clock I was in the metropolis of the Lakes. The shopkeepers were doing a large business in lead pencils and mugs marked "A Present from Keswick." Though I took ice with my liquor, this could not for coolness compare with the sparkling water of the hillsides, fresh from Nature's cellar.

POPPIES.

ALL above the sunshine dazzled, all below the poppies blazed,
Pink and white and glowing crimson; crumbled, like the hands that raised,
The grey columns stood among them, each a record, stern and dumb,
Of the varied past behind them, waiting for the times to come.

All above the sunshine dazzled, all below the poppies gleamed,
And the soft south wind among them murmured like a soul that dreamed;
Dreamed of sweeter, rarer flowers, dreamed of sunshine fiercer far,
Dreamed of all that it had slept on, far beyond its own fair star.

All above the sunshine dazzled, all below the poppies shone,
And one stood 'mid blooms and breezes, dreaming of the days long gone,
Where the long-green English meadows, bathed in glory from the west,
Heard a whisper, saw a meeting; and tears blotted out the rest.

All above the sunshine dazzled, all below the poppies swayed,
As the light airs from the ocean with their fair, frail petals played;
She dashed aside the dew that dared to dim her proud eyes' steady light,
Choosing out the gayest poppies, "They shall catch his glance to-night."

THE MILL OF MINNONY.

▲ COMPLETE STORY.

THE Mill of Minnony existed only in name. It once had done work, and characteristic traces were left. The old wheel at the corner stood half dilapidated and wholly picturesque. On windy nights it creaked and moved fearfully round, but for the most part it realised that its part was played. The mill-lade that led to it was rotten, and the mill-pond that fed the stream was drained, and grew weeds, and flowers, and rushes instead of providing water for the mill.

The banks at each side were a tangle

of honeysuckle, and the meadowsweet and the buttercups alternated and succeeded each other every season. The Mill House was a house of angles, red-tiled, and apparently thrown against the mill-wheel. On the top a rusty weathercock creaked and groaned. Rats ran over the tumbled-in granary floor with an hereditary instinct of the fitness of things.

Behind the house was a steep brae. It was a brae of early primroses, straggly briar trees, and long trails of bramble. It was fringed by weeping birches, and the river ran below it and skirted the old mill-dam.

At the top of the hill stretched a line of Scotch firs. The evening glow shone through the trees, sometimes yellow, sometimes red. The fir-trees stood dark and straight, even when the mist rose off the water merging everything into a hazy general "value" of grey atmosphere.

Joan MacLeod stood at the little window of the mill kitchen on one of these evenings. A crescent moon was in the sky. It appeared to hang in the grey mist. She turned a penny in her pocket, as she looked mechanically out, and thought of a wish.

"Dinna ye, lass," said her mother sharply from the fireside. "Things gang wrang o' themselfs wi'oot fairly temp'in' Providence yon wye."

"Which wye?" said the girl, still staring out of the window.

"Yon's the new meen, and ye are looking at her thro' glass," said the old woman severely. "Ye winna get your wush, and ill may happen o' it."

The girl laughed.

"It disna mak'," she said. "It wisna muckle o' a wush, ony wye."

"Had it to do wi' George?"

The old woman asked it sharply. She was a withered old woman, with sharp features and bright eyes. Her grey hair was tucked away under a white cap. A shawl was pinned across her shoulders. She wore a stuff apron over her short woollen skirt.

"Ye mark my words," she repeated impressively. "Ill wull come o' it. I wouldna trust ony man."

Joan smiled in reply. She was used to the pessimistic utterances of her mother. "Ye are aye hintin' at that, mither," said Joan lightly. "And if onything is gaun to happen, it'll come wi'oot sic nonsense."

"I wouldna promise," said the old woman obstinately. "I hae a notion o' making things siccar, and nae deeleberately trying to upset them. Life is gey chancey."

She shook her head, and added: "And George is but a man."

Joan turned from the window and sat opposite her mother on the oak settle by the fire. She knitted placidly. The old woman rambled on.

"Your feyther often tell't me if it hadna been for me he wud niver have thoct o' me. I pit the notion into his heed, and syne I keepit it there. Noo, it's this and it's that, and I tell ye it disna dee. I dinna haud wi' notions o' that sort, and it's time ye tell't George to sattle things."

The girl looked up.

"I winna," she said. Her tone had the sharp, incisive ring of determination. It cowed the old woman for a moment.

"Weel, Joan, gang your ain gait. Mony hae deen that afore you, and found themselves left. I hope it winna be too late, or that I'll hae the satisfaction o' seein' my words proven."

There was silence after that. Old Mrs. MacLeod deftly wove coloured scraps of material into a mat. Grey double dahlias and magenta roses grew out of the remnants of flannel and stuffs, surrounded by lesser flowers of nondescript hues.

"It's gey lonely here," she said, with a sigh.

"If ye wad stir yersel', Joan, it wad be better."

Joan looked up from her knitting placidly.

"It's nae different to general," she said, and went back to her stocking. Her mother snorted.

"And ye are as happy there, and wad be, if ye were gaun to sit there and knit a' your life. It niver seems to strike ye that we twa lonesome bodies here might be murdered in oor beds ony nicht, and naebody ken for days. It wad be different if there was a man aboot. It wad be mair shortsome, and the mull might be set a-going again. In your feyther's time there was aye cairts o' corn coming, and the mull aye grinding, grinding, and the watter splashing. Yon was living."

It was a time-worn complaint. Joan had grown callous to it. The past glories of the mill did not appeal to her. She was perfectly happy with her life as it was. This was a particular grievance of her mother's. Another was Joan's plainness. Joan was a tall woman, with strong, vigorous features and limbs. She had a low brow, with black hair which grew off it; steadfast brown eyes, a straight nose, and a large mouth. She was absolutely colourless.

The neighbours agreed with Mrs. MacLeod that her daughter was regrettably plain. Joan was singularly free from vanity. She never troubled to consider her looks.

"I ken thinkin' on't winna add or tak' a cubit from oor stature."

Mrs. MacLeod was wont to say impressively:

"But it wad dee a lot to mend matters. It's only a weel-faured face can dee wi'oot thinking. And a new hat dis wurk wonders."

It had been a great surprise to Mrs. MacLeod to find that Joan had found favour in any man's sight. The fact of her engagement to George Alexander had given Joan's mother endless subject matter to reflect on. George was a sort of connexion of their own. He had knocked about in Australia several years, and had come back at twenty-eight with an affectation of indifference towards his native land—the result of thirsting for it every day of his absence. He had returned in late summer when the barley harvest was in full swing. George had sauntered into the field. Joan was among the gatherers. Her hair was gathered up into a big knot tightly twisted up behind. Her sun-bonnet had fallen off. Her sleeves were turned up; she looked a strong, capable woman. She stood apart, resting for a moment. The sun shone in its full force; the heavy "swish" of the ripe yellow barley as it fell, formed a framework to her as she stood there. George stood idly looking at the reapers; they threw jests to him, and laughed as they moved down the field. Joan alone said nothing. She smiled at him as she passed. Her smile set him thinking. He still stood there, for a momentary glimpse of an ideal had come to him. It was one of those moments that come at least once in a man's life. It was the touch of the home atmosphere, the simple labour, the sunshine, and a woman's smile that prompted it. It did not last long, but out of it grew an idea that dominated three lives.

"They're gey ahin' the times here," was what he said, and he sauntered off the field.

The result of the idea was that several weeks after George had asked Joan to marry him. She had said "yes" quite simply, and matters had remained like this for about eighteen months. George and Joan both showed a philosophical calm about their engagement. Old Mrs. MacLeod was the only one who agitated over the matter at all. She began to be afraid that left to themselves they would drift apart,

and that Joan would do nothing to prevent it.

One evening George came in after Joan had been peculiarly aggravating on the subject of their marriage.

"It's a fine nicht," he said, as he sat down and looked at the fire.

Joan nodded. Mrs. MacLeod tossed her head and coughed. It did not occur to either of the others that a reply was necessary, so this passed unnoticed. Mrs. MacLeod coughed again a little louder.

"It's nae wonner ye hae a cauld," said George affably, "wi' a climate like this."

This was too much for Mrs. MacLeod.

"Cauld, indeed; I niver was better in my life. Fat I meant was if a 'fine nicht' wis a' ye had to say, there wisna muckle ees o' ye coming to say it."

George stared. Joan looked up quickly.

"Ay, I mean it, and I hae meant it some time," continued Mrs. MacLeod. She had made her start, and she was determined to have her say. "I hae nae wush to meddle, and ye needna heed me; but I wad like, George, to ken if ye mean to marry my dother Joan?"

The old woman shut her mouth and looked at the young man. It was an opportunity she had been thirsting for, and she meant to carry it to the end. George and Joan both looked at her; they were both too astonished to say anything.

"Div ye, George Alexander?" asked Mrs. MacLeod. Her voice rose shrilly.

"I had thocht o't," said George slowly.

"Had thocht o't!" repeated Mrs. MacLeod. This time she fairly shrieked. "And ye sit there and say that to my face?"

"I didna say I wisna still thinking o't," retorted George. The idea that it was possible to break his word struck him tangibly for the first time. He repeated more firmly, "Na, I'll stick to my word."

"Hoots," said old Mrs. MacLeod, in a more modified key. "Then mebbe ye wad like to gie a little proof. Words are fine eneugh, but they winna marry Joan; and it's nae likely she'll ever hae anither chance."

George laughed.

"I'm nae a man to gang back frae my word," he said loftily. He began to feel pleased with the sacrifice he was making as he glanced at Joan, who was sitting up with a face as determined and set as her mother's. She certainly looked rather a forbidding woman. Her hands were clenched, her lips compressed, her eyes were hard.

"Your mither is richt," said George. He

spoke cheerfully, for he felt distinctly pleased with himself.

Joan had sat silent, and there was a moment's pause after George stopped speaking. Suddenly she rose. She had guessed the fact with a woman's intuition. Her knowledge of life came to her through her lover's careless tones. She grasped the truth at once, as only a strong type of woman can.

"There's nae need for ye to keep your word, George," she said. There was a defiant ring in her voice, otherwise it was hard and expressionless. "I dinna want it."

"Lord's sake, dinna be sich a fule," gasped her mother. "Ye shouldna play wi' men. They are aye kittle, and ye niver ken."

George stared good-humouredly; then he laughed. The idea seemed to him preposterous.

"Weel, weel, Joan, we winna quarrel: we'll fix the day instead."

"I'm no seeking to quarrel," replied Joan doggedly, "an' I'm nae joking."

"Mercy!" breathed Mrs. MacLeod. She looked anxiously at her daughter, and repeated in a loud whisper, "Dinna, I tell ye. He'll tak' ye at your word, maybe."

Joan sat down. Her features had relaxed, but there was still an air of determination about her. George fidgeted uneasily. The old woman kept up a steady murmur of remonstrance.

"There's nae need to say mair," said Joan sharply. A' body mak's mistakes at times. George and I hae made een. I hae made up my mind noo, and George is free."

"And if he heeds a silly lass like you," put in her mother hastily, "he's a puir thing."

Then she began to cry, for George was silent.

"Mebbe ye dinna want her," she said suddenly, her tears vanishing. "Mebbe ye'd rather hae somebody else younger and bonnier? There's Janet McLaren; she'll be glad eneugh to tak' ye."

She spoke at George, but she glared at Joan. She felt rightly enough this was her biggest obstacle.

"If Joan's nae willin', I'm nae gaun to force her to it," he began slowly.

"It's a' ower," said Joan. "There hisna been much, noo there's naething ava'."

Joan got her way. To George it was partly a relief. Joan found it made more difference in her life than she had imagined. She had thought she would go back to the old placid life, and resume her normal condition,

but she discovered that this was not possible. Broken ends of life are not easily joined, and it began to dawn on her that there was a gap in her life. There was a restlessness and a nameless longing for something, an undefinable feeling that she had loved George, and had not known it till she lost him. It began to haunt her when she heard that George had taken her mother's chance advice about Janet McLaren. So every one said, at least, and Joan knew that, if it was true, life lay dreary before her.

"Deed, it's nae wunner he should be ta'en," said Mrs. MacLeod. "It's no that she's bonny. That aleen disna dee it, but she lats him see she thinks a hantle o' him. Noo it's a new goon, and syne it's a hat, and it's a' for him, and he kens it. Sich wicked extravagant folly. I wush, Joan, ye'd stir yoursel' and dee mair that wye. Ye might get him back. The mull is worth his while. That wad aye coont agenst yon lass' chances."

Joan heeded none of it. She outwardly pursued her placid way. Inwardly she was consumed by a fire of jealousy. No one knew, and the days went on. The tale of the broken engagement was an old story, and the new one, though not openly announced, was accepted as a tacit fact by Joan and her mother. Janet McLaren admitted that George had not said anything about the wedding day.

"But I'm nae carin'," she said gaily. "I'm no prood to come after you, Joan, and I'll hae mair sense to keep him."

"There's nae body blamin' you for that," said Mrs. MacLeod.

She admired success.

"There's nae body could hae less sense than Joan, unless mebbe it's George," she added, to keep the balance even.

Joan sat through these conversations quietly. Once she broke through her reserve.

"Has George tell't you in words he lo'es you?" she asked Janet.

Janet blushed and frowned.

"I dinna ken," she said. "But he's aye comin' and comin', and he kens fat a' folk are sayin'."

Joan sighed. At the same time she felt that she would rather die than change the course of events by a single word or action. There are things in this world that have to be, that must exist, and we know it, and though we know it is in our power to change the surface of these things we dare not.

The nights turned frosty as the winter closed in. It seemed to her that the wind

rose at night and moaned as it had never done before. The old weathercock creaked more fitfully, and the rats scampered about at nights. She heard above these sounds the rush of the little river, swollen by the rains and the melting of the snow up in the distant hills where it took its rise.

She looked out one night as she was going to bed. She shivered as a gust swept round the house. Then a silence came.

"It's a fearfu' night," she said hastily. "I hope nae one is oot in the storm."

She was shutting the door when a sound struck her ear. It seemed a wail. She stood still to listen, but it did not come again. "Joan!" it had seemed to her to come floating through the storm. For a long time she stood waiting apprehensively. Her heart beat at the unexplained feeling of suspense and fear.

"If it wis a human voice it 'll cry again," she said, to still her own fears.

Nothing came. The wind swept round the gables with shrill moans and cries.

"It was the wind," she said, and she shut the door.

In the night she woke. The same sense of apprehension seized her, and a feeling of dull reality came to her. "Joan!" the voice seemed to wail. It had a human ring about it, to her excited mind.

"God forgie me if it was a voice," she murmured, "for noo it's a spirit's voice that's crying. I couldna hear ony one in this storm."

She got up and dressed. Her room was upstairs, her mother slept in the box-bed built into the wall in the little kitchen. Softly and quietly she groped her way down, and got the lanthorn. She opened the door softly and stepped out. Her teeth chattered and her heart sank.

"I'm too late," she kept saying.

Still she kept on. The conviction was forced upon her that she had not been dreaming that some one had sought her aid. She tramped up and down the path; the wind met her, and nearly whirled her off her feet. There was no sign of anything.

"The bridge has gone," she said suddenly, as a gleam of light showed her a dark mass of woodwork which had floated down the river. "They aye said it wad the last five or sax winters, and noo it's fairly gone." She lifted her voice and shouted. No answer came. Gradually her fears subsided. She even laughed at her own exaggerated fears. "I winna tell ony soul fat I hae deen this nicht," she said as she shut the door, and crept back to her room.

She woke in the morning with a strange feeling of dread. By degrees the night's occurrence came back to her. Outside all was still and bright. She felt the same instinctive feeling that a tragedy had happened, which she had had it in her power to avert. She went about all day with a foreboding at her heart.

That afternoon she realised the truth. There was a tramp of feet past the window.

"Fat's yon?" asked Mrs. MacLeod eagerly. "Rin oot and see, Joan."

Joan sat still and fixed. Her breath came in short little gasps.

"I canna, mither. Bide a wee."

The old woman hobbled to the door and opened it.

"Fat's the stir?" she called shrilly.

George Alexander left the little group that were passing the "gale" end of the cottage.

"There's been an accident," he said solemnly. "Last nicht, after gloaming, Janet McLaren was coming hame frae her sister's. She was drowned in the river. The path's aye slippy, and, beside, the auld bridge has gone."

He passed on, and the thud of the footsteps died away.

Mrs. MacLeod stood silenced in the presence of Death. Over her shoulders Joan gazed.

"Joan! Joan! Joan!" the air seemed full of her own name. "Joan, save me!"

She had let it pass unheeded. Her rival was dead, drowned in the thirsty river beside the old mill-dam.

Neither woman spoke all that evening. Later on, her mother said simply:

"I'm glad ye didna try and win him back. Lass, it's a heavy hait ye'd have had this nicht if ye'd done so."

"Eh, mither," said Joan, "it's heavier than ye ken."

She put her arms on the table, and laid her head on them.

The days passed somehow. Joan carried the weight with her. She felt as if her life would never end. It seemed to her that the grass was scarcely green on Janet's grave when George Alexander asked her a second time to be his wife. It came about unexpectedly, and in the matter-of-fact way in which crises in people's lives usually do come.

Joan was seated in the fir-wood, looking down on the hollow beneath, where the mill stood. A big heron sailed slowly down the valley; the bees hummed in the heather at her feet; a dragon-fly flitted about. The

bracken had already begun to be tinted with yellow, though the summer was not yet over.

"Weel, Joan," said George Alexander. She started suddenly. "I was in yon field, and I watched you up the brae; I came after you."

The past months had told upon Joan. She had grey hairs, and there were little lines round her eyes. Her mouth had taken a little tremulous droop. Altogether there was more womanliness about her looks.

"We niver seem to meet noo," said George Alexander.

He was looking at her, curiously reminded of the day he had first seen her in the harvest field.

"I hae lang wished to see you," said Joan simply; "I hae something to tell ye—and I canna!" she almost waived.

An inspiration seized George. He leaned forward.

"Are ye seeking to tell me ye liked me better than ye kenned?" he asked, smiling.

Joan drew back hastily.

"Na, na," she said, "onething but that. Lat her hae it a' still, George, for she's deid."

"Fat div ye mean?" asked George stupidly.

"It's Janet," said Joan simply. "I hae deen her enough hairm. I lat her dee."

George still stared. Joan repeated the episode of that terrible night. Her face was set and stern.

"Puir thing!" said George pityingly. "Puir thing!"

This time he took one of Joan's cold, unresisting hands.

"Ye couldna ken, Joan. And things are ta'en oot o' oor hands files."

It was George's first attempt at philosophy, and it did not soothe Joan.

"And sae I hear her crying on me a' the time," she said simply, as if it was an ordinary fact she was stating.

"And ye hiv borne the weary weight a' the time, Joan, and tell't naeboddy?"

"Naeboddy," said Joan briefly. "I hae wushed to tell you, but I was feared ye'd cast it at me, and I couldna bear that, George."

"I hae nae richt to cast it at you, Joan," said George solemnly.

"She was your sweethairt," said Joan.

She put her head down and moaned.

"Na," said George solemnly, "I niver had ane. Nane, except yersel', Joan."

"Folk said you were hers," said Joan, lifting her head, "and ye were aye there."

Somehow a little of the weary burden seemed lifted.

"Aye," said George.
Then he gave a nervous sort of laugh.
"I wisna gaun to be peetied by a' body."
"Then she had nane o' your love," said Joan solemnly.
"Ye hiv it a', Joan, tho' I didna ken afore."

Joan put up her hand.
"George, dinna say that."
"But I maun; I love ye, Joan. Will ye be my wife?"

"Niver, niver, George Alexander," she answered at length. "I couldna; I should hear her voice crying 'Joan,' and I wad feel I had stolen you frae her."

"That's nonsense," said the man sharply.
"I niver lo'ed her."

"Then it's a' the worse," said Joan with true woman's logic.

She felt that somehow reparation must be paid to the dead—at whatever cost and sacrifice to the living. In vain George reasoned, Joan kept to her point.

"I couldna be happy, George. It wouldna be richt."

He lost his temper at last.

"Weel, there's nae mair to be said."

They rose up out of the heather. The sun had begun to go down behind the fir-trees. Joan gave a little shiver.

It was not many weeks after this that George and she met again.

"I'm aff to Australia, Joan," he said sullenly.

Nothing had happened in the interval to shake the moral force of Joan's arguments. She started.

"Must ye gang, George?" she asked softly.

George was still angry with her foolish woman's insistence, but his wrath suddenly melted. He looked at her downcast eyes and trembling mouth.

"Not if ye bid me stay, Joan."

The river still flowed on in its old course. The fir-trees stood straight and dark at the top of the brae. But the brae was ploughed up and grew golden corn, and the old mill-dam was filled with water instead of the tangle of reeds and flowers. And all day the mill-wheel splashed cheerily round. The ghost of Joan's past was laid, merged into the happiness of her life.

"I aye said things were in the Lord's hands," said Mrs. MacLeod piously.
"And noo the mull is staired aince mair I ken it."

THE FREELAND COLONY SCHEME.

ONE does not look for Utopia in Africa, but there are many persons sanguine enough to think that out of the Dark Continent may be extracted a new social and economic light. Who knows? The Laputan philosophers thought to extract sunbeams from cucumbers, and it may be that out of the land of darkness and dark races future generations may receive light and leading. Still, we have our doubts of the practical results of the grand scheme for founding a socialistic colony of Europeans in the heart of Africa. Meanwhile let us see how the Freeland Colony Scheme originated, and what it designs.

Some two or three years ago, Dr. Theodor Hertzka, an Austrian economist, submitted to a large public meeting in Vienna a proposal for an attempt to solve the social problem. The groundwork of the plan was the establishment of a community, somewhere or other, on the basis of perfect liberty and economic justice, in which each individual member should have the unqualified right to control his own actions, and each worker should enjoy the fruits of his own labour.

It sounds vague, but it was not the vagueness that the Socialists objected to, it was that to turn skilled artisans into delvers and ditchers in a strange land would be to lower, not to raise, the level of civilisation. So Dr. Hertzka and his scheme were politely dismissed by the Socialists.

But the Doctor went ahead and elaborated his design in a book called "Freeland; a Social Anticipation," which found a large circulation and eager readers. A number of kindred spirits clustered around him, and laid their heads together, with the result that about the beginning of the present year it was announced that the time had arrived to make a practical attempt to carry out Dr. Hertzka's plan for the solution of the social problem. So a circular, or manifesto, was issued in the following terms:

"It is proposed to establish a community on the basis of perfect economic freedom and justice, a community which shall preserve the independence of its members, and shall secure to every worker the full and undiminished enjoyment of that which he produces. For the site of the new community a suitable area will be selected on the recently-discovered and still un-

occupied highlands surrounding Mount Kenia, in the interior of Equatorial Africa. According to the unanimous accounts of trustworthy explorers, these highlands are remarkably well adapted for colonisation by Europeans; the climate is excellent, the temperature throughout the year being very much like that of spring-time in Europe, and the land is extraordinarily fertile and rich in mineral products. Great Britain, within whose sphere of influence the district lies, has promised her protection, as well as complete freedom in the matter of internal economic arrangements. The Freelanders are already sufficiently numerous, and command the necessary capital to commence operations, and their preparations are now complete."

It was announced that certain members had been actively engaged for some time at Zanzibar and Lamu, and that a first party of selected pioneers would start about the end of February, to be followed a few weeks later by the remainder. A shallow-draught steamer was purchased and sent out, in which the expedition proposed to make the ascent of the River Tana for a distance of about three hundred and fifty miles. When they could get up no further, they would land and form a sort of permanent camp, while selected pioneers pushed on to Mount Kenia to select and prepare the place of settlement for the general body.

The first, or at all events an indispensable, qualification for a Freeland colonist was that he should be able to contribute fifty pounds towards the common fund. This sum was necessary to pay the passage of each from Hamburg to Lamu, in North-East Africa, and to provide maintenance for at least six months, as well as the needful implements. Dr. Hertzka sought for recruits among the Socialist working men of Austria, who, however industrious and however ardent as social reformers, could hardly be expected to have accumulated wealth to the extent of fifty pounds. Therefore public and private subscriptions in aid of the enterprise were needed, and these were forthcoming.

Early in March the first batch of colonists was despatched from Hamburg, and four of them were Britons. Dr. Hertzka thus really and seriously began his attempt to give a modern practical application to old doctrines of political economy. As an Austrian, he was handicapped by the fact that Austria has no new and unoccupied territory for experiment; but he boldly threw himself under the shelter of the British flag, without, perhaps, counting up

what that shelter is worth in the Kenia region.

He could have carried out his experiment in Europe but for the high price of land here, and therefore he turned his attention to Equatorial Africa, where land is presumably obtainable without money and without price. At all events we do not remember that any mention of purchase was made in the proposal of the Freelanders to stake out and occupy land in Kenia. The colony is to be planted there, apparently, on the assumption that individual rights in land do not exist in Central Africa.

Cheap land, it is said, means cheap bread, and land can hardly be got cheaper than for nothing. But land is useless without labour, and the problem to be solved is how the labour which is being diverted to this particular land can be made remunerative.

It should be mentioned that while the Freeland Association originated in and has its centre in Austria, it is international in character, and has branches in England, Germany, America, Holland, Sweden, and Switzerland. From all these countries recruits have been drawn for the new colony, and yet it is only in Vienna that the Association has been formally legalised as a corporate body. Curiously enough, this democratic idea has met with more favour in Imperial and autocratic Austria than anywhere else. It "caught on" in Viennese society, and is patronised by the Austrian Government, who presented the pioneers with a lot of old breech-loaders wherewith to arm a native bodyguard. Moreover, the Government granted subsidies for scientific purposes and for the collection of objects for the Natural History Museum, and the Military Geographical Institute of Vienna undertook to supply the instruments necessary for the expedition.

The pioneers took with them a perfect battery of rifles, sporting guns, and revolvers, and this has by many been deemed a serious initial error, as it will give to the party the appearance of an armed expedition, calculated to arouse the fears and hostility of the natives.

It was upon this point that Mr. H. M. Stanley uttered some words of warning just as the party were leaving Hamburg. It is worth while recalling the opinion of one so experienced in African travel.

"I doubt greatly," he said, "the wisdom of permitting a body of armed whites to obtain a settlement in British African territory, unless all necessary guarantees

have been taken that these new-comers will respect native life and property, and that all negotiations with the natives respecting territory shall be conducted through the intermediary of the British Administrator. There are many other points on which I should like to be satisfied before I could view with favour this rather premature invasion of East Africa by an irresponsible community of whites. I should like to know whether they are free to roam over the country if they are dissatisfied with their first settlement, the limits and terms of their concession, and the nature of the privileges ceded to them. I should like to know also what precautions have been taken against several possible occurrences, which I foresee, by the directors of the East Africa Company. If the directors are satisfied that whatever may be the result of the enterprise, the natives will suffer no harm, and that under no pretext will they be permitted to embroil them politically, the movements of the adventurers will not be devoid of interest, though personally I have no faith in a community with such limited resources being able to achieve anything successfully. I have not heard that they are provided with return tickets, which, in my opinion, they are likely to need before many months."

From this it will be seen that Mr. Stanley does not regard the project with hope or favour. He says nothing about the country proposed to be occupied, for that is a region which lies outside his various spheres of operation. We must look elsewhere, therefore, for information on that point.

Captain Lugard, whose name is so closely associated with Uganda and the Imperial British East Africa Company—and previous to that with the punishment of the slave-raiders on Lake Nyassa—has pointed out some of the political dangers ahead. The want of guarantee of cohesion between the various nationalities represented in Freeland, and of assurance that the high aims and aspirations of the founder will not be used as a cloak for the particular schemes of any one of these nationalities, is one difficulty. Another is the extent to which Great Britain is pledged to protect the natives from attack or injury, and the uncertainty as to the attitude which this mixed community will assume towards the aborigines.

If the Freelanders select a well-populated country for their experiment, they will have

either to buy out or drive out the rightful owners, and in the latter case somebody will have to interfere in the interests of justice and humanity. The somebody in such cases is usually poor, overburdened John Bull. Then, if the new colony is going to assume the functions of a state within a region supposed to be under British influence, awkward complications may easily arise.

"As regards the treatment of natives," says Captain Lugard, "the original intention of the expedition was to take with them a Maxim gun, and though this has been vetoed, they still take a quantity of spare breech-loading arms with which to arm some of the natives. This does not wholly tally with the peaceful and philanthropic views propounded by Dr. Hertzka under the declaration furnished by the Austrian Government to the expedition. . . . The scheme is at present subject to the autocratic rule of Dr. Hertzka, and so long as it remains thus under a responsible head we have less fear that the community may offer any opposition to the constituted authorities and laws and regulations in British East Africa. But it remains to be seen what guarantees to this effect will be given when the community becomes autonomous. Moreover, since its components are of various nationalities, speaking different languages, it is open to speculation whether the views of the various groups will be identical in these matters, and whether the cohesion and brotherhood which are anticipated by their founder will continue to pervade the whole colony."

This is one aspect of the enterprise—and an important one, it must be acknowledged—presented by a competent critic. In this consideration it is assumed that the country in view has all the attributes which Dr. Hertzka desires and supposes for his experiment. Although deemed a Socialistic one, it is repudiated by the Social-Democrats of the country of its inception, and perhaps it might be more accurately described as a co-operative enterprise. The members of the colony are to work at a common task, and all are to share in the common profit. The cultivators of the land are to pay no rent. Yet there is to be no private ownership in property.

It is proposed to make extensive use of machinery in order to replace individual labour as far as possible, and thereby increase the gross returns, but it is not very clear how the machinery is to be supplied, and to whom it will belong. How it is

to be conveyed through pathless regions into the heart of Africa is a problem of which we have seen no proposed solution.

But is the country what Dr. Hertzka supposes and expects? According to the experiences of the unfortunate Chanler expedition it is the very reverse—a region of absolute sterility, except on the slopes of Mount Kenia, between which and the Tana River is an intervening tract of sandy, waterless wastes. Dr. Hertzka believes in a high, fertile, uninhabited plateau on Mount Kenia. Lieutenant von Hohnel positively asserts that no such plateau exists.

Now, this is interesting, because Lieutenant von Hohnel, after his memorable journey with Count Teleki, when the new lakes Rudolf and Stefanie were discovered, has recently returned from a two years' wandering in this very region. He was, indeed, with the Chanler expedition, which proved such a failure. And Von Hohnel says:

"There are densely populated and fertile slopes on Mount Kenia, but no uninhabited plateau; and then the long, wide, barren, and waterless plain underneath, extending towards the also densely populated slopes of the Djambeni range on the north-west."

Dr. Hertzka's picture of a kingdom of nature's products, with an excellent climate, eternal spring, and extraordinary fertility, in the uninhabited highlands of Kenia, is characterised as "a dream—only a theorist's hallucination." Then the Tana River, up which the Freelanders are to push their way by steamer for three hundred and fifty miles, is now represented as a broad shallow stream, full of sandbanks and trees lying athwart the current, and without sufficient depth for a steamer of even shallow draught.

The river, in short, is not now navigable, according to Von Hohnel, and even if the plateau did exist at Kenia, the intervening route is impossible of transport, for it was there that the Chanler expedition utterly broke down. And Von Hohnel, it must be remembered, is no novice in travel. He did not attempt this expedition until he had made that journey with Teleki which proved his ability to overcome obstacles of the most stupendous character.

But assuming that the Freelanders do succeed where Chanler and Von Hohnel failed, and make their way without mishap by the route they have chosen to Mount Kenia—what then? This, according to the latest visitor: "Every square yard of this part of North-East Africa is densely populated wherever the land is productive and

watered. The Djambeni range is thirty miles long and possesses twenty thousand inhabitants. The slopes of Mount Kenia have a large population, including the warlike tribes of the Kadseri and Kikuyu. If the Freeland colonists wish to settle on the base of Mount Kenia, then they must fight for the district they seize, and live afterwards within stockades and on the look-out."

And supposing they do succeed in settling under such very uncomfortable and hazardous circumstances, what are their business prospects?

According to Von Hohnel: "There can be no business future at all. The young fellows must live like peasants, living a healthy life as vegetarians. They may shoot big game at first, but rhinos and the like will soon leave the district, frightened by the white man. The idea of starting manufactures is a dream. Where are the means of transport, either to or from Mount Kenia and the sea-coast? Profit in North-East Africa lies in gold and wool, and so far as Count Teleki, Mr. Chanler, and myself could ascertain—unless, perhaps, in the Turkana district, south of Lake Rudolf—neither is to be found."

The soil, too, is said to be not really fertile, in the sense of the fertility of Borneo or Java, and it yields only one crop yearly of Indian corn, which is the staple food of the people. And to reach this dubious region it has been calculated that the first batch of pioneers will have to expend about five thousand pounds on porters and beasts of burden, and not less than four months of toil and struggle through the barren waste. At the end of June last news was received from the pioneer camp at Lamu, which up to the beginning of May had not received the promised pecuniary and other support from Europe. But for the energy and influence of Dr. Wilhelm, the leader, it is said, the initial expedition would have collapsed altogether. Three or four of the party were to be despatched from Lamu at the end of June in order to explore Mount Kenia up to the summit.

Such, then, is the grand scheme of the Freeland colony, and such are the opinions of it of those who are qualified to speak. The rest of us must be content to wait and watch for the results. The experiment is certainly a most interesting one, if it can only be carried out. But the probabilities are against it in every way; and one can sympathise with the blunt declaration of

the Vienna Socialists—that there is no necessity to go and begin life again, like so many Robinson Crusoes, in a desert African Freeland.

THE STORY OF A POSTCARD.

IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

PATSY, and Dolly, and Dick had applied privately to old Nurse Murdoch for information on the subject of governesses. They demanded to know what they were like. Nurse Murdoch had enlightened them with a gloomy shake of the head. She was not at all pleased at having her precious charges taken from her. She explained that all their good times were over; that they would have to sit upright at meal times, and not speak a word; that they would have to wear their best clothes every afternoon and betray no desire to romp in the hayfield; that they would have lessons and scales from morning till night.

Patsy, who was the eldest, and understood the horror of the picture that Nurse Murdoch had drawn more fully than any of the others, had burst into a storm of tears, and required to be comforted with some mysterious sweets known as "humbugs," which Nurse Murdoch kept always secreted about her person, ready for similar occasions. Many were the "humbugs" that were required before Miss Raymond came.

But Angela had now been at Thesiger Manor a week, and no such awful changes had occurred as the jealous old servant had foretold. Indeed, all her complainings were now turned the other way.

It had been difficult to keep Patsy and Dolly cool and clean and frilled before, but it was impossible now. Five pinafores a day, Nurse Murdoch said indignantly, would not keep them tidy. What with mushrooming in the morning, and black-berrying in the afternoon, and strawberrying at night, she should like to know the person as could keep them in frocks. And as for lessons, the new young lady might be pleasant spoke enough, but it seemed to her it was nothing but play from morning till night. Murdoch did not understand the kindergarten system, and it seemed to her that teaching geography by means of sewing green wool round maps of England, and arithmetic by counting how many strawberries you could eat at once, was a poor way of educating.

The children adored Angela, and openly and flagrantly neglected the faithful Murdoch for their new friend. It was only

Thesiger, of all the household, who never caught a glimpse of Angela as her true self.

To him she was invariably reserved and silent. She avoided him when it was possible, ceased to speak if he entered a room, had no smiles or conversation for him. Thesiger, the soul of sociable good nature, was annoyed at this silent antagonism. He began to wonder if this girl, with the blackest of eyes and sweetest of voices, hated him. He determined to find out.

Accordingly when he came across her taking one of her usual morning strolls, with Patsy hanging on to one arm and Dolly on the other, and Dick walking backwards before her in order not to lose a word of her conversation, he opened the campaign.

"I am glad to see you are giving the chicks a holiday this lovely morning," he said pleasantly.

"We are not having a holiday. We are having lessons," explained Patsy with a chuckle of delight.

"Lessons?" said Thesiger, with a somewhat puzzled glance at Angela's demure face. "What kind of a lesson?"

"We guess how many apples she has in her basket, and then she tells us how many there really are, and then we add them together—and then we eat them," said Patsy.

"I wish I had been taught in that way when I was young," said Thesiger, smiling.

But Angela did not respond to his advances. She preserved a discreet silence, and had assumed a sedate air which she certainly had not worn before.

Thesiger despatched the children on in front to gather flowers, and then turned to Angela.

"I wonder why you are always so very stiff to me, Miss Raymond?" he began, going straight to the heart of the subject according to his invariable custom. "I don't think you have spoken to me of your own accord since you came."

"I am very stupid at making conversation," said Angela calmly.

"I don't want you to make conversation," said Thesiger in rather a vexed voice. "I only want you to treat me as an ordinary human being."

"I haven't anything to talk about."

"You talk fast enough to the children," said Thesiger.

"Too much?"

"Of course not. What an absurd idea!"

"I am only anxious to give satisfaction," said Angela primly.

"I am delighted with the progress the children have made," said Thesiger; "but is there any reason why you should not treat their father as a friend?"

"None at all. Only I know that governesses ought to keep in the background, and I mean to do it. Theodosia impressed that fact well into my mind before I came. This is the first time I have tried my hand at this sort of thing, you know, so I have to be careful. What made you have me, by the way?"

"Because I liked your postcard," said Thesiger promptly. "There was something original about it—and mischievous. But I haven't seen your real self since you came."

"Governesses ought to sink their identity in that of their charges," said Angela. "Theodosia told me so."

"Do you think this immense sense of duty will prevent you from accompanying Patsy to the drawing-room in the evening, and favouring me with some of your delightful music?"

Angela reflected.

"I don't know," she replied dubiously.

"What do you think?"

"I think it is quite consistent with your dignity to do so," said Thesiger lightly.

"You really do? I'll come, then. It is rather dull in the schoolroom when Dick and Dolly are gone to bed. Patsy and I will come in to-night in our best frocks."

Thesiger glanced at the blooming face at his side. He wondered for a moment if he were putting himself into danger by allowing this girl's life to come any nearer to his own, but he finally decided that he was too old to fall in love again, and that there was no reason why he should lead a lonelier life than was necessary.

Angela and Patsy came in that night after dinner. The former went straight to the piano and played it from the moment she entered the room to the moment she left it. Thesiger had not a word with her. Patsy, very clean, and starched and frilled, chattered away to her heart's content. Thesiger expected her to burst into tears when she was borne off to bed; but she went like a lamb at Nurse Murdoch's call, and Angela followed her at once.

A week later Angela took the children for a picnic. The weather was glorious, the sky cloudless, the air warm. Thesiger met her in the hall with an enormous basket on her arm, and asked her where she was going.

"I am going for a picnic," said Angela,

in her most child-like manner. "It is my birthday."

"Many happy returns of it, then. May I come too?"

"I don't think you would enjoy it," said Miss Raymond doubtfully. "We don't mind spiders and earwigs in our tea; but I should fancy that you would object."

"Not at all. They lend a most delicate flavour——"

"And you would have to carry heavy baskets, and wash up in the stream," pursued Angela, heedless of the flippant interruption, "and I don't believe we have enough for you to eat."

"Do let me come. I have a most fairy-like appetite."

"Would you make a fire for us?" said Angela, pondering.

"Anything you like to order me to do I will. It is years since I was at a picnic."

"Then you may come," said Angela, transferring her basket from her own arm to his, "and if you come home hot, and tired, and cross, it will not be my fault."

"I shall not be either. I mean to enjoy it."

And enjoy it he certainly did.

What did it matter if the buns were sugary and hot, or that the butter had melted in the sun? What did it matter that it took half an hour to collect the sticks for the fire, while Angela sat cool and smiling under the shade of her white parasol watching him at work? What did anything matter when the sky was so blue, the trees so green, the air so fresh—and the girl before him so beautiful? Thesiger never enjoyed a picnic so much as he enjoyed this one.

He threw himself on the ground at last with an exhausted air, and drew out his cigar-case. Patsy, and Dick, and Dolly scampered off into the wood. Thesiger and Angela were left alone.

"You must wash up now," said Angela, with a glance at the recumbent figure.

"What a slave-driver you are, Miss Raymond. May I not have a few moments of repose?"

"I will allow you ten minutes," said Angela with a glance at her watch, "and then you must begin. That is what I let you come for. I hate washing up, and it is not compatible with my ideas of conscience to allow the children to smash your china."

Thesiger rolled over on to his back, and gazed up into the blue sky.

"Don't you find life very dull here?" he demanded after a pause.

"No. I am absorbed in the children," said Miss Raymond with an elderly air.

"But in the evenings—when the children don't absorb you. Isn't it dull then?"

"I study, and improve my mind."

Thesiger was silent for awhile. Then he demanded:

"When did you meet Gerty?"

"Gerty?"

"My sister, Lady Devereux. She and you are great friends, I believe."

"Yes. We used to see a good deal of each other at one time. I often stayed with Lady Devereux," said Angela slowly.

Thesiger turned his head to look at her. He wanted to know if her face was changed as well as her voice. The voice had been cold and hard; the face was cold and hard too.

"Do you never stay with Gerty now?"

"No, never."

"Why not?"

"It is always a mistake to go back to places where one has once been very happy."

Her tone was almost bitter. Thesiger glanced at her again in surprise.

"Are you happy no longer?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, in a vegetable sort of way," said Angela, shaking off her unusual mood and making an effort to regain her ordinary manner; "but I was actively happy there, and that makes all the difference."

"Naturally."

He could think of nothing else to say. She went on:

"You see, that was five years ago, and that makes a great deal of difference too. I have settled down now. I hadn't then."

"Don't you ever mean to marry," said Thesiger, with what he flattered himself was entirely impersonal curiosity.

"No," said Angela firmly. "I do not. I tried being engaged and I didn't like it, so I broke it off."

"Poor wretch! Was he good-looking?" asked her companion with a jealousy that he again mistook for curiosity.

"He had a cast in his eye, and he was very warm-hearted—two things that I detest."

Thesiger wondered whether he was too warm-hearted or not.

"How are you going to end?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Angela gravely, "but I have always had a fancy for almshouses. I should like to live in one with white shells round the porch and geraniums in the window. I shall probably take snuff."

"Of course all that is nonsense," said Thesiger; "you are certain to marry."

"Well, I dare say you know best," said Miss Raymond, with a slight yawn.

Thesiger coloured.

"I suppose you think I am very impatient. But I can't help thinking that the true Prince Charming hasn't arrived yet."

"It is time for you to take the tea-cups down to the stream," announced Angela in her most business-like tone. "Be sure you are careful with the spoons. Nurse Murdoch impressed upon me that if I came home with one short I should probably be turned out of the house."

Lyon Thesiger laughed, but he obeyed her meekly enough, and went off with his load to the stream. Angela leaned back against a tree and watched him.

What had made him so suddenly refer to her friendship with Lady Devereux? How much did he know? What did he suspect? How foolish she had been to allow him to suppose that there was anything to suspect! But she had been unable to keep the bitterness wholly out of her tone and manner. Thesiger had made the dry bones rattle. How well she remembered the time that she had spoken of—the happy time before her father had lost his money, when the world was delightful, and the future stretched brightly before her. If any one had then told her that she would ever become governess to the children of Gertrude Devereux's brother, how she would have laughed them to scorn.

She had departed for that visit the happiest, most light-hearted girl in the world; she returned a changed being. Not that outwardly there was much difference—Theodosia, for instance, had never been able to detect any—but her light-heartedness had become cynical, her conversation flippant, her real happiness gone, and only a mask in its place. And yet there was nothing for the world to take hold of and make a story out of.

If Sir Robert Devereux's brother had paid her marked attention, had not other men paid her marked attention also? Was not every one in the house at her feet? If he gave her flowers, bought her songs, whispered words of praise in her ears, so did half-a-dozen others. But there was just this difference with him. The half-dozen others did not matter—they might have been so many flies buzzing round her for all she cared—but he, and he alone, had power to move her. His voice could bring the blood to her cheek, the light to her eye. His glance could make her heart beat fast. In short, she loved him.

Everybody had prophesied that it would be a match. Angela herself thought so.

His every word, every look told her that she was all the world to him.

Gertrude had been displeased at the idea of the marriage—she knew that, and had laughed at it. She felt secure in her lover. He had almost gone to the point of telling her that she was his idol.

Then, suddenly, without reason, all was changed. His attentions cooled, his glance rested indifferently on her, his words were no longer in the veiled language of love. He came down one morning and announced that he was going away, and said good-bye to Angela before them all with an unfaltering voice. She had borne herself bravely, but she felt as though she had been publicly jilted. Too proud to seek for an explanation from a man who was not openly engaged to her, Angela played her part so well that no one suspected the real truth. The general opinion was that she had refused Bernard Devereux, and that he had gone off on account of this disappointment.

Only Gertrude Devereux knew differently.

She hung about Angela in a somewhat guilty fashion after her brother-in-law's departure. She tried to find out if the wound were deep, but Angela fenced so well and talked so gaily, that she decided, with a sigh of relief, that there had not been so much harm done after all. She would have been sorry for Angela to be unhappy, but, after all, Bernard was the future baronet, as she had no children of her own, and she wished him to do better than marry Angela Raymond. She would

have been both surprised and grieved if she had known that Angela Raymond was thinking about him still.

He was very vividly before Angela's mind as she sat there watching Thesiger's efforts to fish tea-cups out of the stream. The very tone of his voice, the touch of his hand, the look of his eyes were acutely present to her. She had tried to forget him; she had tried to marry another man; she had scolded herself severely for still caring for a man who could treat her so heartlessly. But it was of no avail. Alone with herself she could maintain her attitude of dignity no longer. Despire herself she did profoundly, but she knew that to the end of her days she should still retain her early fancy for Bernard Devereux.

The voices of Patsy, and Dick, and Dolly aroused her from her reverie. They had come to "help poor papa," they announced, and a violent altercation was arising between themselves and their honoured parent on the subject of teaspoons. Thesiger had carefully washed them and laid them aside. Dick had dropped them in the stream again because he said they were sticky. Thesiger felt the imputation cast on his character as a washer-up keenly. Besides, the stream was deep, and the spoons sank naturally to the bottom.

Angela came smiling to the rescue. As she tucked up her sleeve to fish them up again, Thesiger noticed that she had a very lovely arm.

He went home in a thoughtful mood.

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